

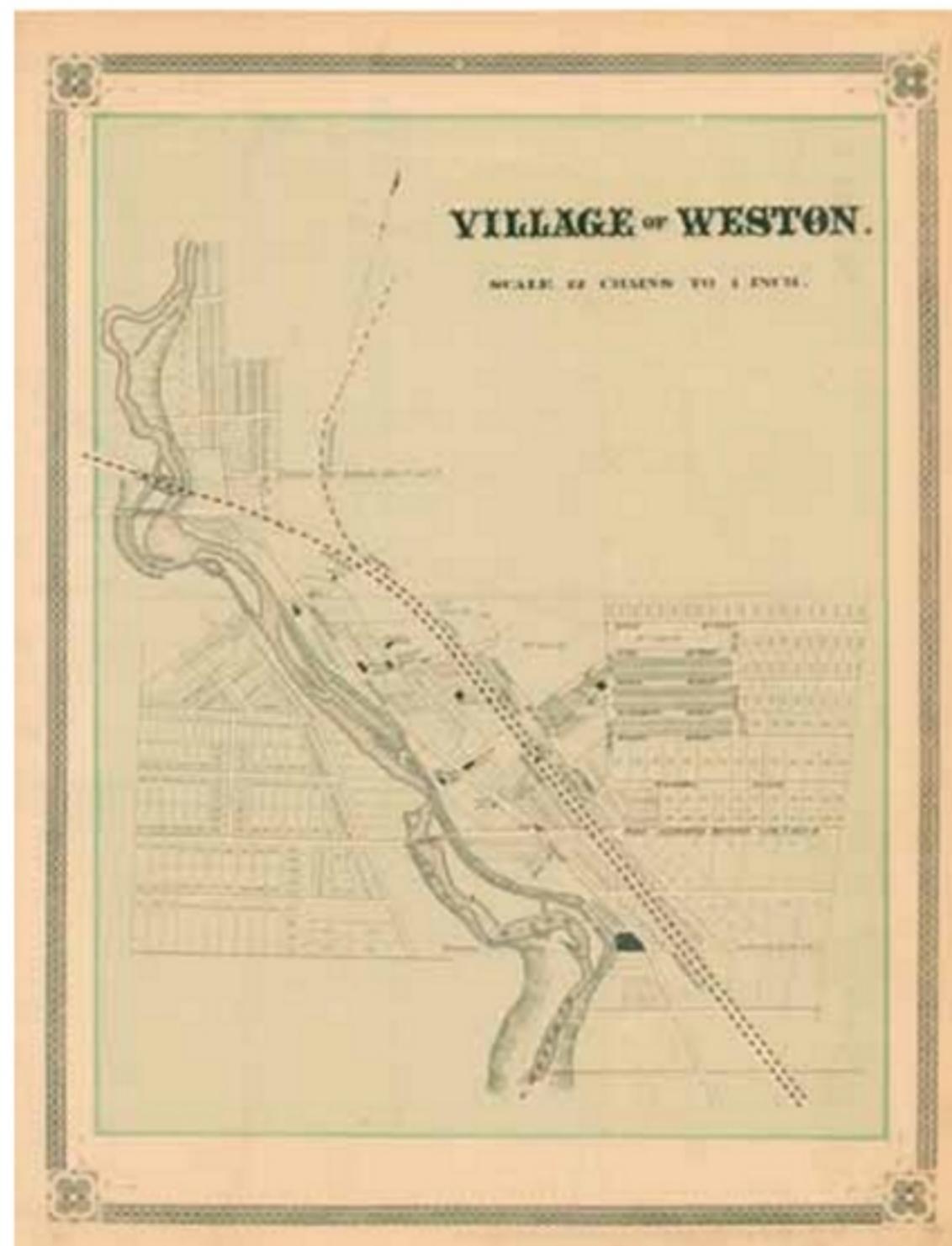
February 7, 2012

# WESTON 2021

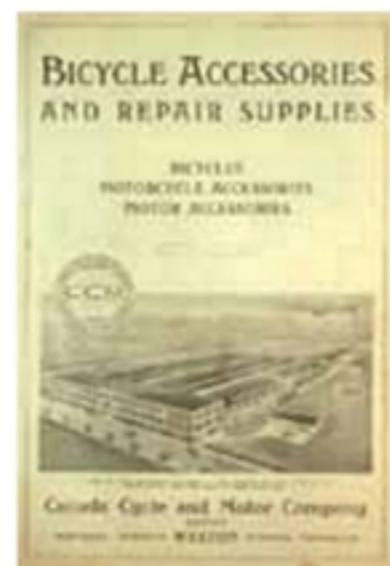
ULI TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PANEL REPORT

## 2. WESTON'S HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Weston was first established in the 1790's when Governor Simcoe felt it was desirable to settle British soldiers on the land. This early settlement remains in the present-day physical form and lay of the land. Weston continued to grow in the early 1800's due to the proximity of the Humber River and nearby natural resources. Industries were subsequently established, such as sawmills and gristmills operating at the edge of the river. The Farr brothers, operators of a sawmill and a grist mill, named the village after their hometown of Weston, Hertfordshire, in England.



Early map of the Village of Weston



Early CCM bicycle catalogue

Weston has a rich and diverse history in transportation of various forms including wagon, rail, aviation, car and bicycle. The coming of the Grand Trunk Railway (now the CN) in 1856 and the Toronto, Grey and Bruce Railway (now the CP) in 1869 provided a tremendous economic stimulus to the Village of Weston, leading to the expansion of local industries. In 1881, the Village of Weston was described as "having excellent railway facilities, an abundance of water power and proximity to Toronto." These attributes continue to have a strong correlation with the Weston we know today, particularly in view of the new Metrolinx and GO Transit plans. Starting in 1850, James Cruickshank built a carriage and wagon works factory on Weston Rd., north of Lawrence Ave. W. The family converted it to a Ford Motor dealership in 1945. Cruickshank Motors Ltd. remained in the family until 2006, when it was sold to another Ford dealer who has kept the Cruickshank name.

The most recognizable transportation sector linked to Weston is the bicycle. Weston is often referred to as "The Home of the Bicycle." In 1917, the Canada Cycle and Motor Co. Ltd. (CCM) was built on Lawrence Ave. W. just east of Weston Rd., where CCM manufactured bicycles for 66 years, until it closed its doors in 1983. Weston enjoyed its existence as a thriving, independent community with several local industries that formed the backbone of the local economy until the 1970's, when industrial uses began leaving the area.

In 1967 Weston became part of the Borough of York, and in 1998 it was amalgamated, along with the other former municipalities, into the City of Toronto. Today, Weston is no longer thriving as it once was. It has an average household income below the city-wide average, and it has faced significant job losses over the past three decades. There are concerns about personal safety and crime. Weston is an area in need of revitalization and is recognized as a Priority Neighbourhood by the City of Toronto.



Weston Rd looking north at Lawrence Ave. W. – early 1900's



Weston Rd looking north at Lawrence Ave. W. – 2011

Despite the challenges, Weston continues to have a strong sense of community with an active residents' association and Business Improvement Area (BIA) group. During the warm weather months the Weston BIA operates a very successful farmers' market on the current GO parking lot north of John St. The market was opened in 1979 and became an instant hit with local residents and beyond. The Weston Farmers' Market runs every Saturday morning from mid-May until the end of October. This mid-sized seasonal market has approximately 25-30 vendors and includes a small antiques and collectibles section. It continues to grow in popularity, with an estimated 750-1,500 people in attendance every week. The market generates approximately \$30,000 a year in vendors' fees for the BIA, which goes into its annual operating budget. The community is quite diverse, with more established neighbourhoods east of the tracks and a largely new immigrant population that occupies the apartments along Weston Rd. The one place that seems to attract all Weston residents is the farmers' market.

Recently, there have been a number of events that could have a positive impact on the Weston Area. Foremost, Metrolinx is working on a rapid transit rail system between Pearson International Airport and Union Station to be in place by 2015. This transit corridor will benefit the Weston community, as it will have a stop in Weston providing very frequent service to both the airport and downtown in less than 20 minutes. The existing GO Transit service along the corridor will also be modestly improved.

The City has also undertaken a number of initiatives that could positively impact the Weston Area, including the Tower Renewal Program and a study to consider the possibility of introducing an Arts and Cultural Centre into the area. Further, George Brown College has considered the area for a potential new campus.

The City of Toronto and Metrolinx believe the new transit line and other potential initiatives may help stimulate revitalization in the area. The visions created at the design charrette and the market examination by the ULI TAP have a common goal: to better understand how to create positive change for the area through development in the community.



Weston Farmers' Market



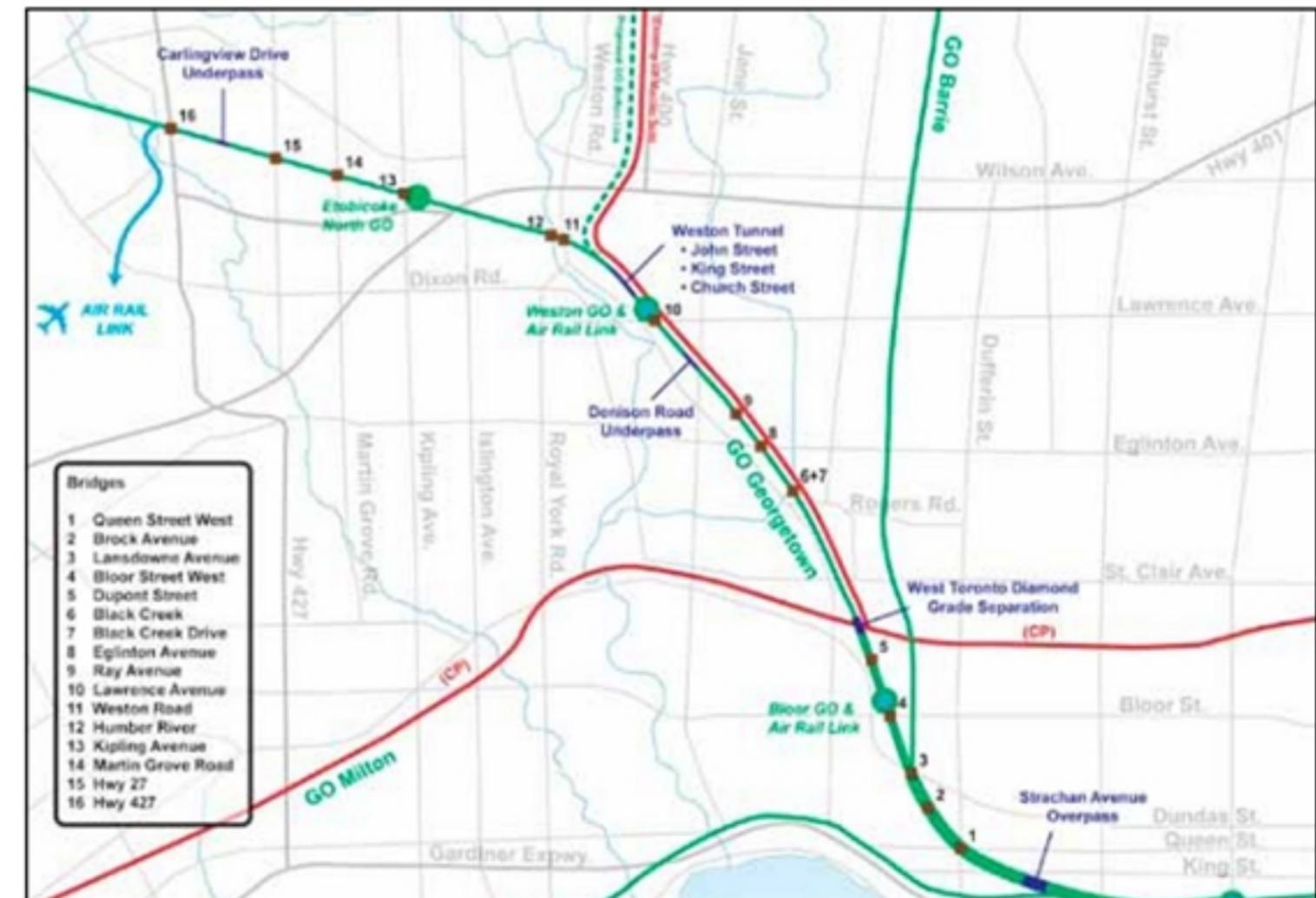
Weston Farmers' Market



John St. looking east



Existing GO station



Metrolinx map showing ARL and GO routes

### 3. CHARGE TO THE PANEL

#### A. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND PANEL'S ASSIGNMENT

Toronto has been experiencing a phenomenal building boom over the past decade and is now a world leader in condominium development. Unfortunately, this development and revitalization have not been shared equally by all areas of the City – areas such as Weston have received almost no new development.

Once a prosperous and self-contained small town, Weston lost much of its manufacturing base during the 1960's and 70's. During the same period, a number of large, slab-form apartment towers were constructed. These towers have recently become home to large numbers of relatively low-income, new immigrants who have brought a new sense of vibrancy to the area while also placing a strain on social services. Weston also has some issues with crime and suffers from the perception that crime is prevalent in the neighbourhood. On a positive note, Weston has retained a sense of small-town pride and boasts a very well organized and committed community association as well as a successful Business Improvement Area (BIA).

The community was instrumental in convincing Metrolinx to create a stop in Weston on the proposed Union-Pearson Air-Rail Link to be in place by 2015. This line will provide all-day service to both the airport and downtown in less than 20 minutes. The GO Transit service along the corridor will also be improved within the next few years.

Development often follows major investment in community infrastructure and transit, and long-term benefits are likely to come to the community in terms of development and community revitalization. The ideas proposed at the design charrette and the market examination by the ULI TAP intend to understand how to attract this reinvestment and development and create positive change in the community.

The TAP was asked to expand on the work completed at the design charrette and to examine the feasibility of the charrette's development concepts. Design charrettes can be very inspirational, but sometimes they result in images and ideas for a community that are not feasible. The TAP was asked to ground the ideas formulated at the charrette in reality by testing them against current and potential market conditions.



Weston TAP walking tour – May 31, 2011



Weston TAP Team Study Areas



## B. QUESTIONS POSED TO THE WESTON 2021 TAP PARTICIPANTS

### i. Neighbourhood Potential

The Panel was asked to address the following questions and challenges related to Weston Village in general:

1. With the major investment in the rail corridor, what is the potential for market development in the Weston Area?
2. If development is not feasible at this time, what needs to be done to encourage/facilitate development in the future?

### ii. Site-Specific Potential

The Panel was also asked to address questions related to the following three areas:

- Study Area 1 – Weston Centre/John St. Area: TPA parking lot & adjacent sites
- Study Area 2 – New GO Station Area: The Metrolinx & adjacent sites
- Study Area 3 – Tower Renewal Area: 1765 & 1775 Weston Rd.

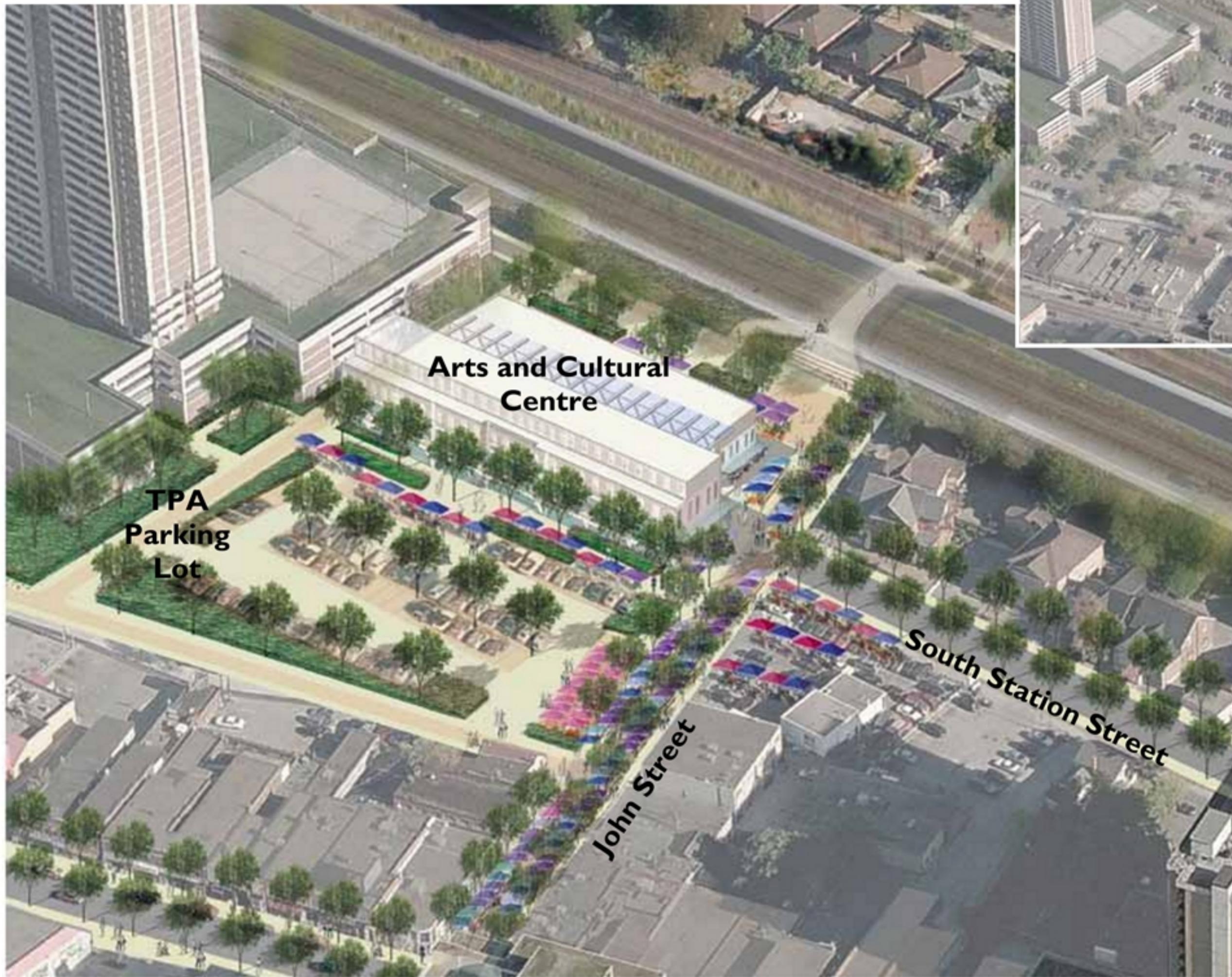
The site-specific questions asked of the Panel were as follows:

1. Are the design ideas developed during the charrette currently feasible?
2. What is the current development potential for the site?
3. What is the future development potential for the site?

### iii. TAP Workshop

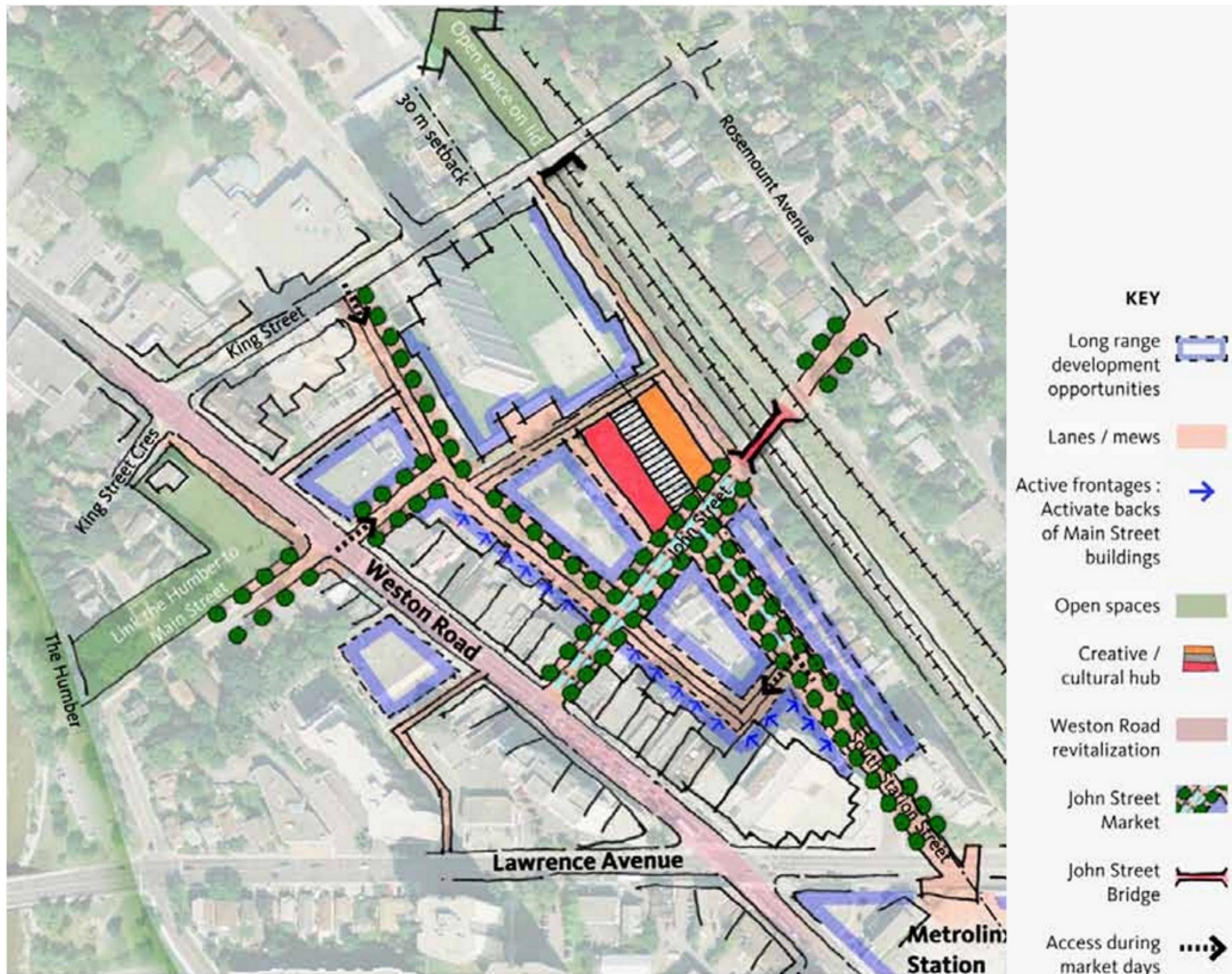
The TAP workshop was held on May 31 and June 1, 2011, in the Weston Park Baptist Church (located adjacent to the proposed new Metrolinx Train Station). The first day began with a series of brief background presentations to the Panel members given by ULI, City staff, community stakeholders and the team leaders from the design charrette. This was followed by a site tour of the three study areas and the immediate surrounding context.

The Panel members spent the remaining day-and-a-half in various groups and as a whole addressing the questions posed to them.



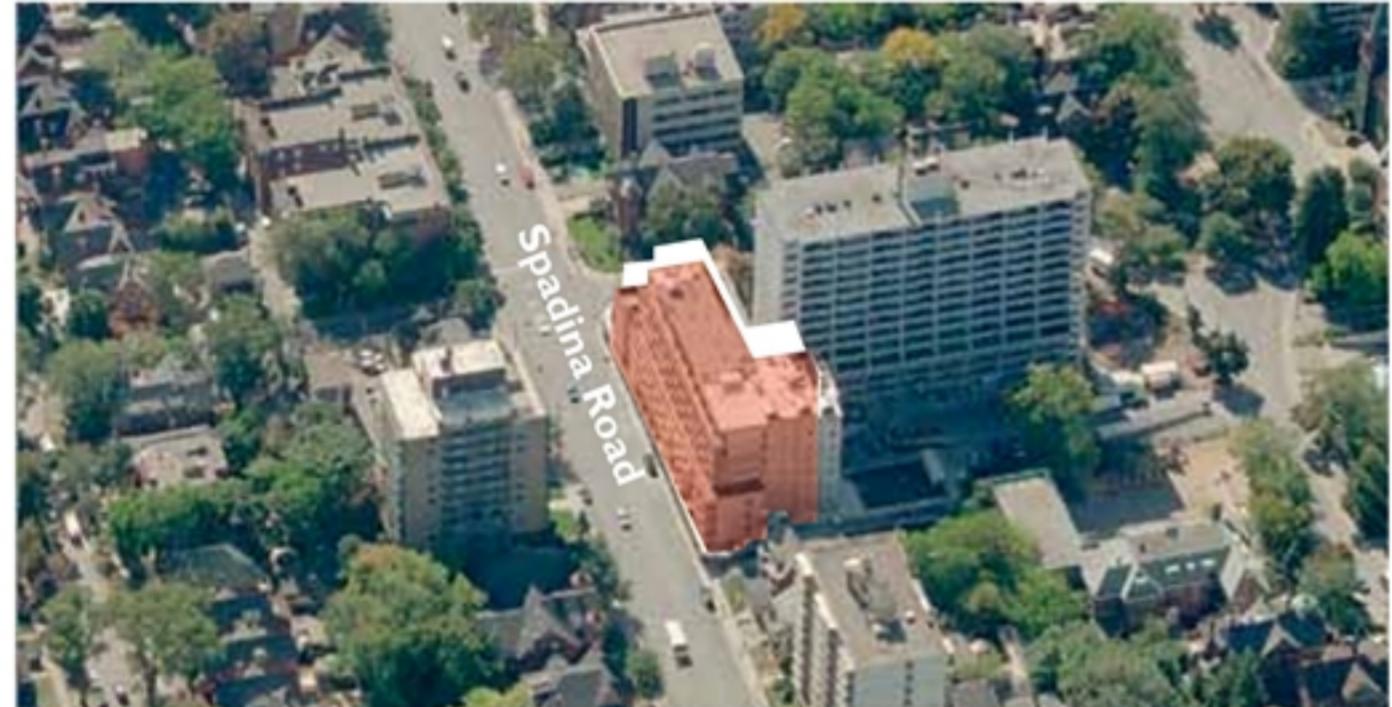
TAP Study Area I:  
Existing conditions

TAP Study Area I: TAP development proposal showing improvements to John St. and South Station St. which could serve as an expanded location for the Weston Farmers' Market, the proposed Weston Community Arts and Cultural Centre and parking area, and the location for the John St. Bridge



## Phase 4 – High-Density Development

This phase builds upon previous phases to include higher-density development due to anticipated increased value of the station area and elimination of surface parking on the north site.



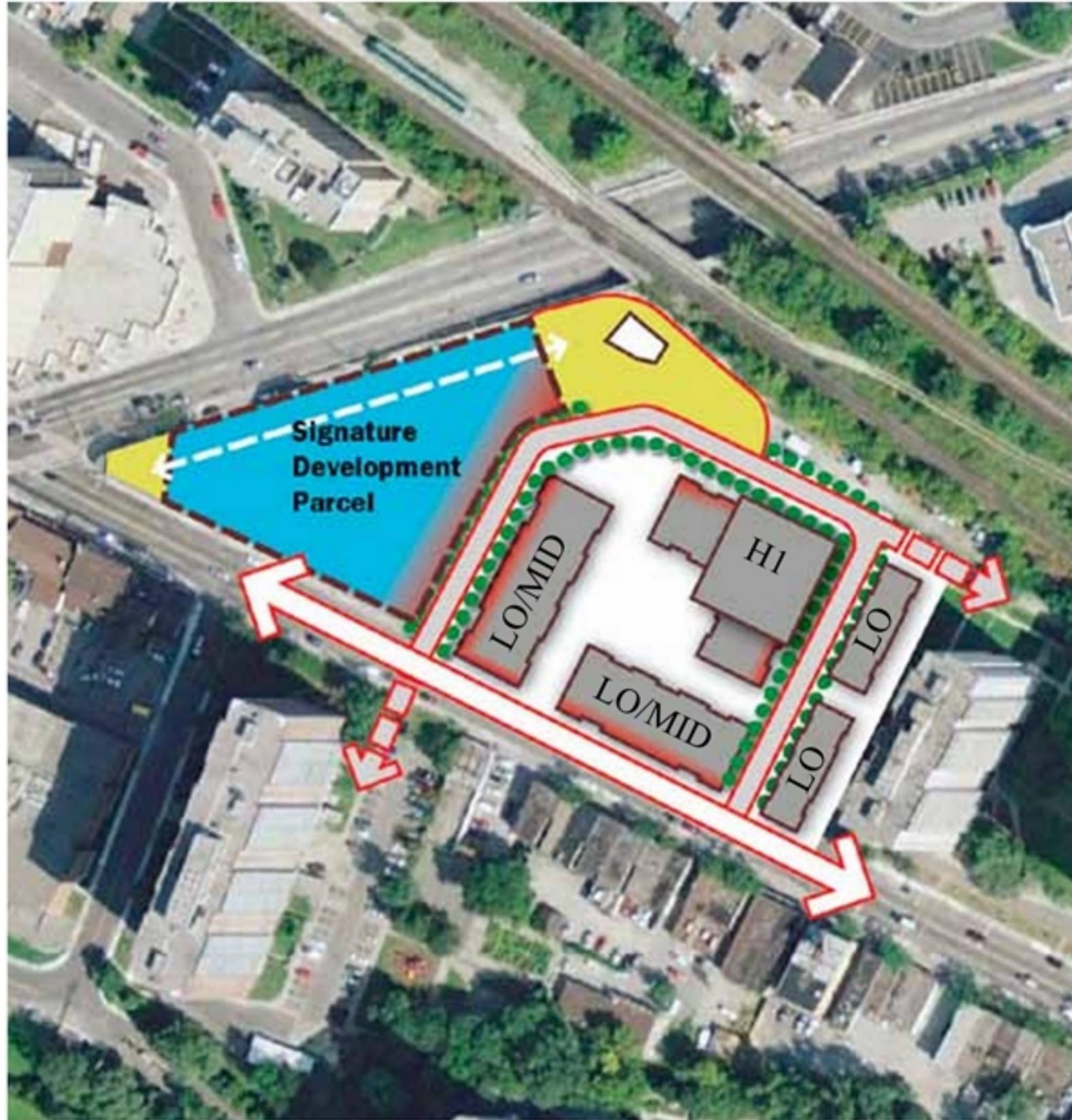
Example of recent infill, mid-rise condominium building on Spadina Rd. (near Bloor) on a site that was originally developed with one large, slab-form apartment building, that provides a sense of the scale of development that could work well in Phase 4



Examples of recent Toronto developments (SAS Building and the Ballet School) that provide a sense of the scale of development that could work well in Phase 4

New buildings and uses could include:

- Mid-rise and high-rise condominiums
- Commercial buildings (retail and office)
- Institutional uses
- Underground, public and private parking
- A public plaza at the intersection of Lawrence Ave. and Weston Rd.



Phase 4: Continued redevelopment of the station area showing the buildup of the former surface parking lot with residential, commercial and institutional uses